

VZCZCXRO5291

PP RUEHAG RUEHAST RUEHDA RUEHDF RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHLN RUEHLZ
RUEHPOD RUEHROV RUEHSR RUEHVK RUEHYG
DE RUEHIK #0072 2881404
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 141404Z OCT 08
FM AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0383
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUEHIK/AMCONSUL THESSALONIKI 0425

UNCLAS THESSALONIKI 000072

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [GR](#)

SUBJECT: ECHR REJECTS GREECE'S ARGUMENTS FOR BANNING ASSOCIATIONS
THAT BEAR THE TERM "TURKISH" IN THEIR NAMES

11. SUMMARY: The Government of Greece's challenge of a decision by the European Court of Human Rights, to allow the operation of associations that include the term "Turkish" in their names has proven unsuccessful. Minority circles said they were "satisfied with the outcome," and Greek diplomatic representatives said that the Court's decision will be respected. END SUMMARY.

12. On October 07, the ECHR rejected the arguments presented by the GoG against an earlier decision by the Court which asked Greece to allow the operation of associations that include the term "Turkish" in their names. On March 27, the ECHR decided that Greece was violating Articles 11 (freedom of assembly and association,) 14 (prohibition of discrimination) and 6 - paragraph 1 - (fair hearing within a reasonable time) of the European Convention on Human Rights, by not allowing the "Turkish Union of Xanthi" and the "Cultural Association of Turkish Women of the Region of Rodopi" to operate (Reftel.) The GoG claimed unsuccessfully that the use of the term "Turkish" constitutes a violation of the Lausanne Treaty, which only provided for a religious, i.e. Muslim minority in Thrace.

13. The response to the decision by the ECHR has been muted so far. The President of the "Turkish Union of Xanthi" Ahmetoglou made brief statements, in which he expressed "satisfaction with the outcome" and said that he "expected Greece to implement the legal framework that was in place prior to the banning decision (1983)." He said that the Union's next steps would be agreed upon after legal consultation. Greek MFA sources on the other hand, insisted the decision would be duly observed by the authorities. It is worth noting however, that the associations concerned never stopped operating and therefore, the decision has merely offered them the symbolic reward of being able to put up a sign with the name of their choice.

14. COMMENT: MFA contacts and most commentators have always considered the GoG's appeal more as a "face saving" exercise than an attempt to change the decision. Thus, it is not surprising that the ECHR's decision drew few comments from officials and the media. It is an important decision however, that touches upon one of the main grievances -collective identification - of the Turkophone section of the Muslim minority and its implementation has the potential to improve the relations between the two communities considerably. END COMMENT

KING